

INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN ARMENIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT: INSIGHTS FROM A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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This article examines the relationship between academic engagement, social engagement, and student well-being. Participants were asked to complete a survey regarding student engagement, well-being, and provide some background information. The study found that both academic and social engagement were positively associated with student well-being, indicating that students who are more involved in their academic and social lives tend to have higher levels of well-being. These findings suggest that universities should focus not only on academic achievements but also on promoting academic and social engagement as a means of improving overall student psychological well-being. The study also shows that studying in a fee-based educational system that involves financial obligations like tuition fees and educational expenses can exert a substantial influence on students' well-being.

Key words: *academic engagement, social engagement, well-being, young adulthood, learning experience*

Introduction

The issue of student well-being in higher education is currently receiving significant attention. Full-time higher education typically involves students aged between 18 and 25 years, which is also a critical age range for the emergence of psychological problems¹. Additionally, the pressure to manage the demands of coursework, extracurricular activities, and personal responsibilities can take a toll on students' mental health. One study found that a considerable number of college students in the study displayed indications of depression, anxiety, and stress, and it is recommended that initiatives be

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¹ Lipson, S. K., & Eisenberg, D. (2018). Mental health and academic attitudes and expectations in university populations: Results from the healthy minds study. *Journal of Mental Health*, 27(3), 205–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2017.1417567>

established to enhance the mental well-being of college students². Recognizing the importance of student well-being, many higher education institutions are implementing support services and resources to address these challenges³.

Taking into consideration the challenges in higher education for students, it is important to widen the perspectives of understanding students' mental health and well-being issues. The article aims to discuss the role of student engagement in well-being, focusing not solely on mental health but also on the socio-psychological perspective, particularly the interaction between person and situation. From a socio-psychological perspective student engagement can be seen as the relevant concept for studying mental health and well-being of students.

Students' engagement and well-being

Student engagement encompasses various aspects, such as their actions, thoughts, and feelings, all of which provide valuable information about their overall learning experience⁴. While achieving the minimum level of learning is important, true student engagement involves a deeper level of involvement and commitment to learning. Engaged students demonstrate a genuine curiosity, intrinsic motivation, and a passion for acquiring knowledge and skills beyond what is expected. Engaged students seek out additional resources, engage in independent research, and pursue opportunities for intellectual growth outside of formal academic settings. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of engagement and the range of behaviors it encompasses, educators can design learning environments and instructional strategies that foster active participation, focused attention, and persistent effort⁵.

The level of student engagement can have a considerable impact on various aspects of a student's education, including their learning experience and subjective well-being. Active involvement in learning cultivates cognitive and emotional patterns that enhance an individual's capacity for continuous personal growth. When students are engaged, they tend to continue their studies, earn better grades, and acquire various skills and attitudes that equip them for post-college life. In other words, engagement promotes the development of habits that expand students' potential for ongoing learning and personal growth, leading to long-term well-being⁶.

The connection between student engagement and well-being is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, when students are actively engaged in their learning, they are more

² Ramón-Arбуés, E., Gea-Caballero, V., Granada-López, J. M., Juárez-Vela, R., Pellicer-García, B., & Antón-Solanas, I. (2020). The Prevalence of Depression, Anxiety and Stress and Their Associated Factors in College Students. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(19), 7001. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197001>

³ Baik, C., Larcombe, W., & Brooker, A. (2019). How universities can enhance student mental wellbeing: The student perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(4), 674–687. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1576596>

⁴ Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>

⁵ Yin, X., Huang, Y., Zhang, X., Chen, Y., Wang, M., & Qian, H. (2022). Influencing Factors and Improvement Path of Academic Engagement among College Students in the Context of Epidemic Prevention and Control. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(19), 12939. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912939>

⁶ Kuh, G. D. (1995). The Other Curriculum: Out-of-Class Experiences Associated with Student Learning and Personal Development. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 66(2), 123–155. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2943909>

likely to experience a sense of purpose and fulfillment⁷. Engaged students tend to be more motivated, focused, and enthusiastic about their education. This positive mindset can contribute to their overall well-being and mental health. Secondly, student engagement has been linked to personal growth⁸. When students are engaged, they are more likely to participate in class, ask questions, and seek help when needed. This active involvement in the learning process enhances their understanding, retention of information, and academic performance. Promoting personal growth can positively impact students' self-esteem and overall well-being. Moreover, student engagement fosters a sense of connection and belonging within the educational community. Engaged students often feel more connected with their peers, teachers, and the school environment. This social connection is vital for students' emotional well-being, as it provides a support network and a sense of belonging⁹.

Research objectives and methods

Two research objectives were defined: to investigate the relationships between academic and social engagement and subjective well-being, and to deepen the understanding of the role of student engagement in well-being by proposing a predictive model that incorporates academic and social engagement, along with relevant social-demographic factors.

Academic engagement refers to the extent to which students actively participate in educational activities, such as attending classes, completing assignments, and engaging in learning¹⁰. Understanding whether academic engagement predicts student well-being is essential for educational institutions to develop effective strategies that promote student success and overall well-being. Social engagement encompasses participation in social activities, relationships with peers, and involvement in extracurricular activities¹¹. By exploring the influence of social engagement on student well-being, we can gain insights into the importance of social interactions in contributing to positive mental health and overall student well-being.

Data collection took place from January to February 2023. The participants were university students aged between 18 and 25 from various regions of Armenia (N=94). The study relied on voluntary participation and did not provide any rewards or incentives. Those who chose to participate were asked to fill out a consent form and a survey. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) is the scale used to measure participants' well-being. The WEMWBS is a tool designed to evaluate the

⁷ Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York: Springer

⁸ Gong, Z., Jiao, X., Zhang, M., Qu, Q., & Sun, B. (2022). Effects of personal growth initiative on occupational engagement of college students in the uncertain social context: A cross-lagged model and a moderated mediation model. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 988737. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.988737>

⁹ Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. https://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/Distance_learning_article-Pascarella_Terenzini.pdf

¹⁰ Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student Engagement with School: Critical Conceptual and Methodological Issues of the Construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45, 369-386. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303>

¹¹ Sá, M. J. (2023). Student Academic and Social Engagement in the Life of the Academy—A Lever for Retention and Persistence in Higher Education. *Educ.Sci.*2023,13,269. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030269>

mental wellbeing of a group of people, consisting of 14 items that are worded in a positive manner. This measure assesses an individual's subjective well-being by evaluating both eudemonic (related to personal growth and purpose) and hedonic (related to pleasure and enjoyment) aspects of well-being¹². The Higher Education Student Engagement Scale (HESES) consisted of 28 items used to measure student engagement. The initial version of the scale differentiates five facets of student engagement: (1) Academic Engagement, (2) Cognitive Engagement, (3) Social Engagement with Peers, (4) Social Engagement with Teachers, and (5) Affective Engagement¹³. The psychometric evaluation of the scale conducted by the “Personality and Social Context” research laboratory further adjusted the factor structure of this measurement, proposing two main factors: academic and social engagement. These two factors were used in our analysis.

The survey collected demographic and some background information about the participants, such as age, gender, educational level, employment status, and whether they received paid or free education.

Data analysis and discussion

The data analysis utilized Pearson correlation and multiple regression methods.

The goal of the correlation analysis was to examine the relationship between three key variables: academic engagement, social engagement, and student well-being. The analysis aimed to uncover whether higher levels of academic or social engagement were associated with better student well-being or if any significant patterns emerged. This statistical approach provided quantitative evidence to support or refute potential relationships, enabling a more comprehensive assessment of the variables under investigation.

The results of correlation analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Well-being, academic and social engagement: results from correlational analysis (N=94)

	Academic Engagement	Social Engagement	Well-being
Academic Engagement	1	.633**	.329**
Social Engagement	.633**	1	.327**
Well-Being	.329**	.327**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results revealed significant positive correlations between academic engagement and student well-being ($r = 0.329$, $p < 0.01$) as well as between social engagement and student well-being ($r = 0.327$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that higher levels of academic engagement and social engagement are associated with higher levels of student well-being.

The findings of correlational analysis align with previous research that has

¹² Marmara, J., Zarate, D., Vassallo, J., Patten, R., & Stavropoulos, V. (2022). Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): measurement invariance across genders and item response theory examination. *BMC psychology*, 10(1), 31. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00720-z>

¹³ Zhoc, K. C. H., Webster, B. J., King, R. B. et al. (2019). Higher Education Student Engagement Scale (HESES): Development and Psychometric Evidence. *Res High Educ* 60, 219–244. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-018-9510-6>

demonstrated the importance of both academic and social engagement in promoting student well-being¹⁴. The positive correlations indicate that students who actively participate in academic activities and engage in social interactions experience higher levels of well-being. The positive associations between academic engagement, social engagement, and student well-being suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing student well-being should consider strategies to promote and facilitate both academic and social engagement.

Table 2 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the relationship between several predictor variables and the dependent variable of well-being. The aim of this analysis was to determine the extent to which the predictor variables contribute to the prediction of well-being. The predictive model incorporated social and academic engagement, along with several social-demographic factors, including age, sex, educational level, employment status, and whether the participants studied in a fee-based or free-based educational system.

Table 2. Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Educational level	-.863	2.770	-.035	-.312	.756
Sex	-1.992	2.394	-.107	-.832	.408
Age	-.180	.423	-.049	-.425	.672
Employment status	3.105	1.850	0.177	1.678	0.097
Studying in a fee-based	5.158	2.369	.238	2.177	.032
Academic engagement	3.815	1.563	.346	2.441	.017
Social engagement	2.247	1.224	.236	1.836	.070

A significant regression was found for the relationship between academic engagement and well-being ($F=3.432$, $p=0.003$) with an adjusted R^2 of 0.155. It indicates that higher levels of academic engagement are associated with increased well-being ($B=3.815$, $p=0.017$). Additionally, studying in a fee-based system also affects well-being, with students in the fee-based system having higher levels of well-being than those in the free system ($B=5.158$, $p=0.032$).

The results of the regression analysis indicate that academic engagement and studying in a fee-based system are significant predictors of well-being. Participants who reported higher levels of academic engagement and studied in a fee-based system tended to have higher levels of well-being. However, educational level, job, age, and sex did not demonstrate significant relationships with well-being in this analysis.

Based on the results of regression analysis, we can conclude that engagement in the learning process is a predictive factor for students' well-being even though the learning process can be difficult and challenging. Learning is accompanied by interest, the acquisition of new knowledge, and it brings inspiration, joy, and a sense of achievement

¹⁴ Sá, M. J. (2023). Student Academic and Social Engagement in the Life of the Academy—A Lever for Retention and Persistence in Higher Education. *Educ.Sci.2023*,13,269. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030269>

and development. That is why academic engagement can be seen as a contributing factor to well-being. Another interesting factor is that payment for learning also has an input to the well-being alongside academic engagement.

Conclusion

Based on our findings we can conclude that academic engagement and social engagement can have effects on student well-being, depending on how it is experienced and managed. Academic engagement can provide students with a sense of purpose and achievement, which can contribute to positive mental health outcomes. Social engagement can provide students with a sense of belonging, connectedness, and support, which can contribute to positive mental health outcomes. These findings are supported by other studies as well. Engaged students may experience greater self-esteem, less stress, and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety. Engaged students may also experience greater social support and connection with peers and faculty members, which can also have a positive impact on mental health¹⁵. Research suggests that fostering high learning engagement can contribute to a positive cycle where academic engagement supports healthy habits, and in turn, healthy habits promote academic success and overall well-being¹⁶. Actively engaged students in learning have opportunities for personal growth and development, such as developing new skills and discovering new interests, which can contribute to a sense of fulfillment and well-being. Student engagement is important as it fosters interaction and community, and one way to increase students' motivation to participate in their coursework and campus activities is through academic and social engagement. The pursuit of education can facilitate personal growth, self-discovery, and the development of valuable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. These experiences can enhance self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of self-efficacy, all of which are important components of well-being. Furthermore, paid education, or education that requires financial investment such as tuition fees or educational expenses, can have a significant impact on well-being. Engaging in paid education requires a commitment of time, effort, and resources.

The result of the study emphasizes the need for educational institutions to prioritize interventions that enhance both academic and social engagement to improve student well-being outcomes. Educational institutions can focus on creating environments that foster active student participation in academic activities and provide opportunities for social interactions among students.

Limitation and future research suggestions

It is important to note that this analysis has several limitations. Further research is recommended to utilize larger and more diverse samples. While the results indicate a positive relationship between academic engagement, social engagement, and student

¹⁵ Vargas-Madriz, L. F., & Konishi, C. (2021). The Relationship Between Social Support and Student Academic Involvement: The Mediating Role of School Belonging. *Canadian journal of school psychology*, 36(4), 290–303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08295735211034713>

¹⁶ Yin, X., Huang, Y., Zhang, X., Chen, Y., Wang, M., & Qian, H. (2022). Influencing Factors and Improvement Path of Academic Engagement among College Students in the Context of Epidemic Prevention and Control. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(19), 12939. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912939>

well-being, further research is needed to establish the directionality and underlying mechanisms of these relationships. Longitudinal studies or experimental designs could provide a more robust understanding of the causal nature of these associations.

Additionally, other potential predictors not included in this analysis should be considered to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing well-being. Particularly, it's important to emphasize the need for further research and practice that takes into account the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of engagement. It is therefore important to continue conducting research and implementing practices that recognize the complexity of engagement and take into account the diverse needs and experiences of students. By doing so, we can better understand how to promote positive outcomes and support the well-being of students in multiple domains. This could include developing interventions that target specific aspects of engagement, such as motivation or social support, or creating learning environments that are inclusive and culturally responsive. Ultimately, by recognizing the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of engagement, we can better support students in achieving their academic and personal goals.

ԺԵՅՈՒ ՍՈՆԳ, ԱՆԻ ԳՐԻԳՈՐՅԱՆ, ՆԱՐԻՆԵ ԽԱՉԱՏՐՅԱՆ – *Ուսումնասիրելով ուսանողների ներգրավվածության ազդեցությունը սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության վրա հայաստանյան բարձրագույն կրթության համատեքստում. լայնահատույթային հետազոտության արդյունքներ* – Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են ուսանողների՝ ակադեմիական և սոցիալական ներգրավվածության ու սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցության փոխկապվածությունները: Հարցման արդյունքում մասնակիցները տրամադրել են տեղեկատվություն սոցիալ-ժողովրդագրական որոշակի գործոնների վերաբերյալ և լրացրել ուսանողների ներգրավվածությունն ու սուբյեկտիվ բարեկեցությունը չափող հարցարաններ: Ցույց է տրվել, որ և՛ ակադեմիական, և՛ սոցիալական բարեկեցությունը դրականորեն է փոխկապված բարեկեցության հետ, ըստ որի՝ այն ուսանողները, որոնք ակտիվորեն ներառված են ակադեմիական և սոցիալական կյանքում, բարեկեցության ավելի բարձր մակարդակ ունեն: Ստացվում է, որ համալսարաններում պետք է ոչ միայն ուշադրություն դարձնել ուսանողների ակադեմիական առաջընթացին, այլև խթանել ուսանողների ակադեմիական և սոցիալական ներգրավվածությունը՝ դրանով իսկ նպաստելով նրանց հոգեբանական բարեկեցությանը: Ուսումնասիրությամբ ցույց է տրվել նաև, որ վճարովի կրթական համակարգում սովորելը, ինչը ենթադրում է ուսման վարձավճարի պարտավորություններ և կրթական ծախսեր, նույնպես ազդեցություն կարող է ունենալ ուսանողների բարեկեցության վրա:

Բանալի բառեր – *ակադեմիական ներգրավվածություն, սոցիալական ներգրավվածություն, բարեկեցություն, երիտասարդություն, ուսումնասիրություն*

* **Ժեյու Սոնգ** – ԵՊՀ անձի հոգեբանության ամբիոնի ասպիրանտ

Անի Գրիգորյան – ԵՊՀ «Անձ և սոցիալական միջավայր» գ/հ լաբորատորիա, Հոգեբանության գիտահետազոտական կենտրոնի գիտաշխատող

Նարինե Խաչատրյան – հոգեբանական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ, ԵՊՀ անձի հոգեբանության ամբիոնի վարիչ

ЖЭЮ СОНГ, АНИ ГРИГОРЯН, НАРИНЕ ХАЧАТРЯН* – *Исследование влияния вовлеченности студентов на субъективное благополучие в контексте высшего образования в армении: результаты поперечного исследования.* – В статье рассматриваются взаимосвязи между академической вовлеченностью, социальной вовлеченностью и благополучием студентов. В рамках опроса участники предоставили информацию об определенных социально-демографических факторах и заполнили опросники, измеряющие вовлеченность студентов и их субъективное благополучие. Исследование показало, что как академическая, так и социальная вовлеченность положительно связаны с благополучием студентов, что указывает на то, что студенты, более вовлеченные в свою академическую и социальную жизнь, обычно имеют более высокий уровень благополучия. На основе полученных результатов можно утверждать, что университетская среда должна принимать во внимание не только академические достижения, но и содействовать академической и социальной вовлеченности студентов, тем самым способствуя повышению их психологического благополучия. Исследование также показывает, что обучение в платной системе образования, предполагающей финансовые обязательства, такие как плата за обучение и расходы на образование, может оказать существенное влияние на состояние благополучия студентов.

Ключевые слова: *академическая вовлеченность, социальная вовлеченность, психологическое благополучие, молодежь, опыт обучения*

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